

Some people try to score (or engrave) and stain their own concrete floors. Why should they avoid that?

The simplest answer to that: You've only one shot at it. You need someone with experience, not only with the craft of it, but the design and color of it. In the scoring part, you can get a wavy line or a divot, or nick. Since it is an acid stain and it takes about two days for it to settle into the concrete, you have to know, in advance, exactly what the color is going to do.

Portrait of an *Artisan*



Renay Bowles/AA-S

What are some of the properties of concrete that make it an unusual medium to manipulate?

That's the fun part. Every floor is different: how it's poured, how it's dried and how it's finished. So, concrete is like marble because the variations in patterns in concrete are random.

You're also a gifted painter of murals and canvases; what, if anything, do you borrow from your experience with those media for concrete floors?

Like a canvas, every floor has its unique properties, and it's challenging to find color and design solutions especially for each space. The biggest adjustment is the scale, because by its very nature, there's a lot more distance between the

viewer and the subject viewed than you have with a painting on a wall. You have to keep a picture in your mind about the overall scale of the thing while you are painting, so you don't get too small.



Photo courtesy of Peter Neal Nickel

Nickel first scores a concrete floor to establish a pattern, then paints on stains that take up to two days to settle into the surface.

What are common mistakes clients make?

When I show people the variety in my portfolio, they tend to want to do something neat for each room, and that's not advisable, because you want the house to look unified. When you walk into the doorway of a room and you have a scoring pattern that runs cohesively through the house, it looks better than separate little patches for each room. The same goes for color, too.

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